



U.S. Forest Service  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

---

Bringing sound conservation practice and scientifically-based resource management decisions to America's working rural and wild landscapes.

---

# Natural Resources Conservation Service

**MISSION:** "Providing leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment."

- Nearly 12,500 employees in all 50 States and two U.S. territories.
- Conservation practices applied on 184,000,000 acres of working farm, ranch, grass, and forestlands.
- This model of intergovernmental cooperation is based on a voluntary, incentives-based approach to conservation, a thorough knowledge of natural resource conditions and trends, and the use of effective, science-based technologies.
- The NRCS provides the science-based information, expertise, and financial assistance people need to practice good stewardship. Most NRCS field staff work at the county level directly with conservation districts, natural resource districts, and others in a partnership effort.
- Congress adopted the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill), which included a centerpiece conservation title, with enhanced funding of more than \$17 billion.
- Seven decades of commitment to working side-by-side with private landowners who are responsible for stewardship on approximately 1.5 billion acres of America's landscape.

---

# United States Forest Service

**MISSION:** "Sustaining America's forests and grasslands for the benefit of present and future generations."

- Over 35,000 employees managing public lands in 46 States.
- Manages the 192,500,000-acre National Forest System for multiple purposes on a sustainable basis.
- Provides States, Tribes, communities, and non-industrial, private landowners with technical and financial assistance through cost-effective, non-regulatory partnerships on 500 million acres of non-Federal forestland.
- Operates the largest forestry research organization in the world with scientists carrying out basic and applied research in the biological, physical, and social sciences.
- Operates, with other Federal land management agencies and State and local partners, a unified command system to respond to wildland fires and other natural disasters. Last year, 99.1 percent of all wildland fires were successfully extinguished on initial attack.
- Manages an active International Forestry Program which protects our forests from invasive species, encourages international trade of forest products, seeks to improve management of some of the world's most threatened forests, and provides humanitarian relief following disasters around the world.

---

## First Term Major Accomplishments

- A reorganized Forest Service for the 21st Century—estimated annual savings: \$90 million dollars.
  - Eliminated one Deputy Chief area.
  - Consolidated budget and finance and human resources functions into a service center.
  - Streamlined information technology functions.
- A reorganized NRCS for the 21st century—estimated annual savings: \$10 million dollars.
  - Eliminated Regional Offices.
  - Consolidated disparate field units into Regional Technical Centers.
- Improved financial reporting and accountability to make possible the first three clean audits in USDA history. In the course of accomplishing this, NRCS was the first Federal agency to receive the American Society of Public Administration Center for Productivity's Organizational Leadership Award for its systems approach to performance management and the Forest Service was removed from the GAO list of high risk agencies.
- Implemented new contracting software called Protracts for NRCS cost share programs freeing up \$5-\$10 million in administrative time to be redirected toward getting conservation practices planned and applied.
- Fully implemented the President's Healthy Forest Initiative and secured Congressional enactment of the President's Healthy Forest Restoration Act, quadrupling the number of Federal acres treated annually for fuel reduction purposes.

- 
- Fully implemented the expanded conservation title of the 2002 Farm Bill.
    - Implemented the Conservation Security Program, an innovative new program that focuses on rewarding good stewards. CSP was implemented in 12 watersheds in 2004 and 202 watersheds in 2005.
    - Completed 21 major rules allowing full implementation of conservation programs in the 2002 Farm Bill.
    - Executed over 47,000 Environmental Quality Incentives Program contracts in 2004 alone.
    - Enrolled over 3,000 Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program contracts in 2004 alone.
    - Helped land managers create, restore, or enhance wetlands through more than 1,000 contracts in 2004 alone.
  - Issued new regulations governing national forest planning that were 20 years in the making and will reduce the cost and time for revising forest plans by half.

---

## Principal Goals for the Next Four Years

- Increase the breadth and enhance the quality of cooperative conservation as a driving force in NRCS and Forest Service programs in the future.
- Restructure the delivery of NRCS programs at the watershed level to better integrate a wide range of NRCS programs and better coordinate with non-NRCS conservation efforts.
- Realize full implementation and full participation in the 2002 Farm Bill. Building upon the 2002 Act and subsequent efforts by NRCS and the Forest Service, create a new, private funding stream to support private land conservation through an emission credit trading program.
- Better position the United States in global forestry markets through the development of market-based approaches to ecosystem services.
- Increase the Forest Service response to the effects of fuel loads, invasive species, loss of open space, and recreational challenges on the National Forests.
- Continue to remove administrative barriers and reduce administrative costs associated with Forest Service natural resource issues.

---

# Cooperative Conservation

## Issue:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is committed to voluntary, locally led, working-lands conservation.

## Where We Want to Be:

Farmers and ranchers continue to face many natural resources challenges. America's investment in addressing these challenges through private-land conservation practices has increased significantly since the 1985 Farm Bill. However, increases in Federal funding can and should only go so far. We need to find additional, non-Federal support.

## How to Get There:

Following are some of the ways NRCS will strengthen its commitment to cooperative conservation:

- Participate in and help lead the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation.
- Implement the President's Wetlands Initiative.
- Cultivate and expand existing partnerships, particularly with other Federal agencies and Technical Service Providers.
- Reduce conflicts between agricultural and broader community needs and desires through locally led, area-wide, and watershed-scale planning.
- Strengthen partnerships with Indian Tribes to expand conservation efforts on Tribal lands.
- Form a Natural Resources Conservation Foundation to establish a private lands conservation endowment.
- Encourage business and industry investment in private lands conservation to strengthen community-based conservation.

---

## Healthy Watersheds

### Issue:

A healthy watershed is one where food and fiber production is occurring while environmental benefits and outcomes, such as improved soil productivity, water quality, and wildlife habitat are being achieved.

### Where We Want to Be:

A locally led, scientifically based watershed approach will ensure the most productive use of Federal investments that address clean water, aquatic habitat, water supply and conservation, and environmental protection. Managing programs at a watershed level provides a way to integrate the activities of a wide range of NRCS programs and coordinates with non-NRCS programs to achieve the maximum results.

### How to Get There:

- Continue rewarding conservation enhancement efforts through the Conservation Security Program and organize other efforts accordingly.
- Plan, design, and implement specific watershed conservation practices under programs such as the Conservation Technical Assistance program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.
- Demonstrate the impacts of conservation practices through a new Performance Results System. Reporting analysis methods will be modified to allow all programs to be managed and monitored by watershed boundaries in addition to State and county boundaries.
- Re-establish a four-phased watershed approach—planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, maintenance and enhancement.

---

# Realizing the Investments from the 2002 Farm Bill and Expanding on These Investments in the 2007 Farm Bill

## Issue:

The 2002 Farm Bill established technical assistance, cost-share and incentive payments, easement payments, and stewardship payment programs.

## Where We Want to Be:

NRCS is working to achieve full implementation and full participation of the 2002 Farm Bill. Building upon the Agency's work on the 2002 Act and the work NRCS and the Forest Service have done with the Department of Energy to develop a reporting system for greenhouse gas and carbon emissions reductions, we have the opportunity to open a new, private funding stream to support private, farm, ranch, and forest land conservation through an emission credit trading program included in the 2007 Farm Bill.

## How to Get There:

- Streamline conservation programs, both internally for employees and externally for customers.
- Evaluate program performance, share results, and make continuous improvements.
- Use its portfolio of conservation programs effectively and efficiently to eliminate duplication and maximize results.
- Implement the President's Wetlands Initiative.
- Use Conservation Technical Assistance to complement other program investments and to assure the Farm Bill investment is maintained.
- Develop a proposal for buying and selling green house gas and carbon credits in the 2007 Farm Bill.

---

# Better Position the United States in Global Forestry Markets

## Issue:

The United States is the world's largest consumer, producer, and importer of forest products. Imports of forest products have increased, and timber production is shifting to forest plantations.

## Where We Want to Be:

- Assess the effects of trade and of reductions in agricultural subsidies on the Nation's forests, expanding existing balance-of-trade analyses to address ecosystem services and environmental effects.
- Pinpoint areas where ecosystem services are in decline, identify potential market-based applications, define the Forest Service's role in encouraging these markets, and further develop applications with the most immediate promise for incorporation into the 2007 Farm Bill.
- Form a network of partners interested in promoting market-based approaches to ecosystem services and coordinate efforts to sustaining the Nation's forests.
- Incorporate a framework in the Forest Service strategic plan and directives system to guide the agency's efforts in promoting market-based approaches to ecosystem services, in partnership with State Forestry agencies and other groups.

## How to Get There:

The Forest Service and NRCS will develop a proposal for this initiative for inclusion in the Administration's 2007 Farm Bill package, or as a separate legislative proposal.

---

## Threats to America's Forests and Grasslands

### Issue:

- The Forest Service is focusing national attention on the four major threats to the values, goods, and services Americans want from their National Forests and Grasslands:
- **Fire and Fuels.** Since 2000, the United States has had its biggest fire seasons since the 1950s, and five States have seen record fires.
- **Invasive Species.** Invasive species are rapidly destroying resource values all across America.
- **Loss of Open Space.** Every day, America loses more than 4,000 acres of working farms, forests, and ranches to development.
- **Unmanaged Outdoor Recreation.** Rising recreational use—particularly of off-highway vehicles—is outstripping the Forest Service's management capacity and damaging resources on public land.

### Where We Want to Be:

- The goal over the next 4 years is to continue to reduce the risk to communities and ecosystems by improving the health of the Nation's forests and grasslands. We want to eventually treat 8 million at-risk Federal acres per year (Forest Service and Interior Department agencies combined).
- The goal over the next 4 years is to increase the number of acres treated for invasive species to more than 2 million acres annually (on all ownerships), and to reduce the rate of spread of the most threatening invasive species by 50 percent.
- The goal in 4 years is to slow the rate of loss of open space by 25 percent.
- The goal in 4 years is to implement a standardized national policy through completed travel management plans on most national forests.

### How to Get There:

In each of these four areas, there is adequate existing authority to accomplish these objectives through a series of agency regulations, or through the development of new agency policy directives.

---

# Removing Administrative Barriers

## Issue:

Forest Service natural resource decision-making processes need to be progressive, timely, and financially responsible.

## Where We Want to Be:

By 2008, Forest Service processes and procedures will be cost-effective and consistent. They should promote partnerships and collaboration.

## How to Get There:

In the next 4 years, the Forest Service will:

- **Control invasive species:** Where herbicides can safely be used to control invasive weeds, simplified environmental analysis procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act will be developed.
- **Protect cultural resources:** The agency will work with the State Heritage and Preservation Offices to streamline heritage review requirements.
- **End-of-year reporting:** Field units must report annual accomplishments, but the more time they spend doing paperwork, the less actually gets done. By streamlining their reporting requirements, the agency will get more dollars to the ground.
- **Protect endangered species:** An interagency team will remove redundancies and improve efficiencies in interagency consultation and overall species conservation.
- **Protect migratory birds:** The Migratory Bird Treaty Act will be streamlined by completing a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and developing regulations to address the long-term management implications of protecting migratory birds.
- **Reauthorize mineral leases:** The National Environmental Policy Act regulations will be streamlined when the Bureau of Land Management reauthorizes mineral leases on national forest land.